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Anniversary Sermon

PREACHED AT

ALL SOULS' CHURCH,

LANGHAM PLACE,

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23RD, 1859,

BY THE VERY REV.

R. CHENEVIX TRENCH, D.D.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER.

This Corporation was founded in the year 1850, for allowing Permanent Pensions, of not less than 30% and not exceeding 40% per annum, to the Widows and Orphan Unmarried Daughters of Clergymen of the Established Church, and for affording Temporary Assistance to Necessitous Clergymen and their Families throughout England, Wales, and Ireland; since which period the Committee have been enabled to distribute—

To 100 Ladies elected Pensioners, the sum of .	£14,325	15	0
To 289 Clergymen in great temporary distress .	4518	17	0
To 175 Widows of Clergymen	1814	8	0
To 179 Daughters of Clergymen	1126	0	0
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	£22,085	0	0

There are at the present time 88 Ladies Pensioners on the Funds, and 130 Applicants for Admission.

The urgent appeals for Special aid are most numerous and distressing, upwards of *four hundred* being now before the Committee, who very earnestly solicit your assistance to enable them to carry out the benevolent intentions of the Corporation.

The Committee venture to direct your attention to the accompanying Sermon, by the Very Rev. Dr. Trench, Dean of Westminster, as the best appeal they can lay before you.

THE REV. JOHN E. COX, M.A., F.S.A. } *Hon. Secs.*
 JAMES N. GOREN, Esq., M.A. }

HENRY BRAMALL, *Secretary.*

LIFE SUBSCRIPTION, £10 10s., conferring the privilege of Two Votes at every Election of Pensioners. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION, £1 1s., with Two Votes at each Election for the current Year.

OFFICES OF THE CORPORATION, 4, ST. MARTIN'S PLACE, LONDON, W.C.

S E R M O N .

I Cor. ix. 11.

“If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?”

ST. PAUL is, throughout this Chapter, asserting the right and reasonableness which there is in that rule of the Church everywhere laid down by him, namely, that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel—that they who have voluntarily renounced other means of livelihood, to the end that they might give themselves wholly to the ministry of God's word, to reading, to exhortation, to prayer, should in return be furnished by the Church with an adequate maintenance; for “who,” he asks, “goeth a warfare at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or, who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?”—or, as he again inquires, in the words of my text—“If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?”

And it seems to me, my Christian brethren, that these words laying down as they do the Church's rule, as asserted by the great Apostle,—Christ, indeed, had asserted it before, when He declared “the labourer is worthy of his hire”—must at once so commend themselves to us, both from the authority with which they come, and from their conformity to sound reason, and that innate sense of justice, which is implanted in all our hearts, that I need spend no time, waste no words in proving to you that to be a duty which we shall at once recognise as such—namely, that all who minister at the altar should have provision made for them, enabling them to live by the altar which they serve—not sumptuously, not splendidly, no one would require this; but still, always assuming due prudence to be used on their part, with a freedom from sordid cares, from pinching want—with a modest, yet sufficient supply for the just needs of their earthly life.

How far it was ever thus in our English Church, whether she ever approached very nearly to this ideal, may well be a question—is, indeed, more than doubtful. And yet it is only too certain that she is farther removed from it now than ever in times past she has been ;—that the whole course and tendency of things is, to remove her from it further and further still. I mean in this way. It is familiar to us all that there has been, during the last thirty years, an immense increase in the number of our Clergy, though one falling very far short of the relative increase of the population. But, with this multiplication of the Clergy there has been no corresponding multiplication of the means at the disposal of the Church for their sustenance and support. Something may have been done by a more equal distribution of her revenues ; by suppressing certain offices and dignities, which seemed to many as luxuries which she ought not to indulge in, while primary necessities could only be inadequately supplied. Something, too, has been done, but far too little, by the liberality of those to whom God has given the awful responsibilities of a stewardship of this world's wealth. But, when all is put together, when all is counted up that has been derived from these and all other sources, it still remains true that the accession to the *number* of the Clergy is very far larger than the accession to the means for that Clergy's support—that we have, and must have, a far greater proportion of poor Clergy, of those who, ministering in the Church, will yet be most inadequately furnished from the Church's revenues, now than we had thirty or forty years ago—and that the number of these, so far from diminishing, will go on increasing every day—and the claims on this and kindred societies will become more and more urgent, and more and more numerous, with every year.

We must look this fact in the face. The question, indeed, has come to this—Shall we have for this immensely growing population, expanding and multiplying on every side, who will perish in their own corruption, if left to themselves, if the healing powers of the Gospel of the Grace of God are not brought to bear upon them through the ordinances of Christ's Church, shall we have for them a poor Clergy, or no Clergy at all? Would to God these were not the only alternatives. Would to God that our unhappy divisions, and the separation of so large a portion of our brethren from the national Church, had not rendered it impossible that the nation, as a nation, should step in to meet and supply these needs of the Church, which indeed are her own needs, the nation's needs no less than the Church's: for the nation, the State, requires orderly, moral, virtuous citizens, to fulfil their duties to her, and she will only find

such in those who have been first trained in the knowledge and fear of the Lord. Would to God that the large hearts which have been given to some of our princely proprietors of the soil, of our great merchants and manufacturers, had been given to all—that those solemn responsibilities involved in the stewardship of this earthly mammon had been more clearly acknowledged by them—that ampler portions of this entrusted wealth had been consecrated to the honour of Almighty God, and the due maintenance of his service and worship for ever.

Nor do I despair of a better day in this respect arriving. Who would have believed thirty years ago that within the space of thirty years so many Churches, almost all of them decent, very many of them fair and comely, and not a few beautiful and glorious, should have risen in our land? A more difficult task remains—the endowment of our Churches; more costly, having less at the moment to show in return for the sacrifices made; and yet I cannot despair of the day arriving when the great, the noble, the wealthy of our land, yes, and all of us who have any superfluities and abundance, shall be stricken with a wholesome shame, with the sense of an injustice committed, wherein we have a share, so long as our Church continues to present such a spectacle as now on too many sides she displays—a time when we shall count it inconsistent with our Christian profession to live in our ceiled houses while His house lies waste; while they who minister in His word and sacraments, instead of being accounted worthy of double honour, receive oftentimes a scantier subsistence than the hired servant who waits at our tables; and when one mighty movement shall be made through the land to redress this wrong, to repair this injustice. Why should not such a day arrive? Is anything impossible with God? One breath in power of His life-giving Spirit on our dead bones, and the spirit of love and self-sacrifice, which such an undertaking would require, would be ours. No need, then, of such meetings as ours—of such Societies as that whose claims I am pleading before you to-day. But till that hoped-for day arrives, we shall not be able to do without them; *till* then, they must step into the gap, and fill it as best they may.

There is one fact, of which I need hardly remind you, which renders this the more needful. We, of the Reformed English Church, believe that a married Clergy, a Clergy, that is, of which every member is free to marry, of which the larger portion are married, is one which accords best with the practice of primitive antiquity—with the scheme and groundplan of the Church as laid down in the New Testament, above all, in the Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul; for we

believe that "marriage is honourable in all," and not least in those who thus will be enabled to be a wholesome pattern to others in those holiest relations of life, the husband's and the father's; which pattern, by a compulsory celibacy, such as that of Rome, they would be debarred from the opportunity of affording—that in a thousand delicate ministrations of love and tenderness, for which female hands are fitted the best, he will find that help and assistance from wife and from daughters, which no other could have supplied as well, even if they had attempted to supply it at all. But accepting this, a married clergy, as most consonant with the practice of the early Church, with the mind of the Spirit as declared in Holy Scripture, and indeed, not merely accepting it, but demanding it as we do (for England would not for an instant tolerate any other than a married clergy), we must accept it with its consequences; and must not wonder or repine if one of these consequences is that their widows and their orphans are often claimants of that bounty, or, as I have sought throughout this discourse to put it, of that justice, which you are invited to render to them this day.

For you will not, I am sure, say, you will not for an instant think that this too frequent destitution in which these are left is, except in rarest instances, the result of any improvidence on the part of the husband and the father—of any selfishness, leading him to squander on self and upon the present that which ought to have constituted a provision for the coming time and for those whom at any moment he might leave behind, but whom he preferred to impose as a burden on the Church and on the charity of others. Alas! there was no room for this improvidence, not so much as the temptation to this selfishness. Where should he have found the means of making the slenderest provision against the future, who could hardly with utmost effort keep grim and gaunt poverty from his door in the present?—who upon an income little, if at all, exceeding that of many of our artisans, was expected to maintain the appearance of a gentleman—and who not merely was expected, but who did joyfully out of his own deep poverty continually cause the riches of his liberality to abound toward others who seemed to him yet poorer and needier than himself.

As little, my brethren, I beseech you, say to yourselves that those who fell behind in the race of life, those who occupied these humblest and worst-endowed posts in our Church, were the slothful, the sluggish, the inefficient, the ill-equipped *for* their work, the careless *in* the work—who anywhere would have been the lowest and the last. Believe nothing of the kind. In respect of the outward visible marks of success, if it is true in any calling and profession, it is

truest in this high calling of ours, that, as regards what the world styles success, the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong—God showing how little store *He* sets on these vulgar objects of our ambition, in that so often He causes the worthiest and the best to miss them—in that so often not merit, not labour, not long years of service, but chance and accident, the favour and caprice of men, are the disposers and dispensers of them. None should be readier to own this than those to whom any portion of these things have fallen; for they can hardly avoid knowing, though the world in general may not know, how many there are, toiling out of sight, unnoticed, unrewarded, with their record indeed upon high, but little or no record here, uncheered by the applause of men, for they are content with the praise of God, who in this their obscurity, neglected, forgotten, overseen, are yet doing most effectually the Church's work—knitting by their labours, their self-denials, their patient continuance in well doing, the affections of the masses of our people to her, approving her to be indeed what she claims to be—the channel of priceless blessings to the souls, and, in a secondary sense, to the bodies also, of men. How many such are at this moment in our England, in this huge metropolis, in our crowded manufacturing towns, in remote waste agricultural villages, spending and being spent, counting not their lives dear to them, wearing out those lives in the slow yet sure martyrdom of labours far above their strength; how many, the leaven of our lump, the salt of our earth, the seekers of our strayed, the binders up of our bruised, the healers of our sick—whose work, what it has been only the last day will declare—that day which shall declare the good no less than the evil, and when these, the obscure of earth, the unrewarded of men, these, that have turned many to righteousness, shall shine like stars for ever in the firmament of heaven.

Many such men, I believe, have left behind them those who were far dearer to them than their own lives, have bequeathed the care of these to us who remain. They died in faith. To the eye of sense it might seem as if they were leaving their beloved to a cold heartless world, henceforward exposed to the pitiless blasts of adversity, without shelter or defence. But they heard in the deep of their souls such words as these:—‘Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in Me;’—they heard and believed. And how, my Christian brethren, does God fulfil these promises which He makes to his servants? Is it not by putting into the hearts of others of his people a spirit of love, of tenderness, of compassion, so that they find no choicer task than to pour the oil and wine of consolation into the bleeding wounds of those who would else lie

neglected, down-trodden, uncaared-for on the broad highway of the world?

This task, so precious in God's sight, the Society for which I am speaking this day — The Friend of the Clergy Corporation — has undertaken, according to the measure of its power to fulfil. I am sure you must approve of the *form* which the relief administered by it has assumed; that having, alas! such very limited funds at its disposal, it dispenses them now, I believe, exclusively in the form of pensions to the widows and unmarried daughters of Clergy—and I am no less confident that no other assistance could be half so welcome, or half so cheering as this is, to the hearts of them for whom primarily these benefits are intended. For how many a man who accepts for himself, with a firm heart, the trials, however sharp, which poverty and adversity may bring; yea, and bravely accepts these for his beloved ones too, so long as he is with them to cheer, to strengthen, and to sustain, does yet shrink in spirit, and his heart fail and quail within him, as he pictures to himself the time when his sheltering arm shall be withdrawn, and they left to the cruel buffetings of fortune without the shield of his protecting love.

And then further, you will, I am sure, count it well and wisely done, that this Society, narrow as its income is, does not make its pensions excessively small; that, on the contrary, none are less than 30*l.*, and, with the age of the pensioners, rise to 40*l.* a year. In the attempt to make our benefits spread over as large a surface as possible, they may, while they gain in superficial extent, so lose in depth as almost to cease to be benefits at all. This Society has avoided this mistake, and will help effectually when it helps at all. It is only sad to hear, that last year there were one hundred and thirty candidates for the four additional pensions, which were all that it was possible to add to those that had been previously granted. I will not waste words in commending this good work to you. Assist, sustain it if you can, not with the transient gift of a day, but with the continuous support of years. That is, indeed, given to God which is given to his orphans, his widows—and given out of a true love to Him, will return many times more into your own bosoms.

THE END.

